

For the price of today's newspaper, you can change lives; [Final Edition]

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The greatest gift you can give someone can't be bought in a store. And it doesn't cost much. In fact, for the price of this newspaper, you can give people a gift that will literally change their lives.

The gift is the gift of literacy, one of the most important things to possess in today's knowledge economy. You can do your part in advancing literacy in British Columbia by picking up a copy of The Vancouver Sun on Thursday, CanWest's annual Raise-a-Reader Day.

Many celebrities, including local, provincial and federal politicians, professional athletes, and personalities from The Sun and Global television, will be selling the newspaper on street corners. Fully 100 per cent of proceeds from those and newsstand sales that day will be donated to the Raise-a-Reader program, which supports family-based literacy programs. These include the Vancouver Public Library Foundation and public libraries across the province, Canucks Family Education Centre, Literacy B.C., Aboriginal HIPPIY Canada (Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-School Youngsters), S.U.C.C.E.S.S. (parent-child bilingual programs), the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, the Big Sisters of B.C.-Lower Mainland, public elementary school libraries, and many other literacy organizations.

Started by The Sun in 1997, Raise-a-Reader has raised more than \$1.6 million for family literacy in B.C. Last year, Premier Gordon Campbell announced that the province would match funds raised in the province, and 2004 alone saw a contribution of \$754,000. The province will match funds again this year.

In 2001, the Raise-a-Reader program went national, and last year the program raised \$1.6 million nationwide, for a total contribution of \$2.8 million in the three years it has operated.

These funds have begun to make a dent in the problem of low literacy, which is unquestionably one of B.C.'s and Canada's most pressing social problems. According to research, more than 40 per cent of British Columbians have a hard time meeting the everyday demands of reading, writing and using numbers. This can have a

profound impact on people's ability to find and keep a job, and to access information about their health, safety and legal rights.

Twenty-six per cent of Canadians with the lowest literacy skills are unemployed, compared to only four per cent of those with the highest. Even when people with literacy problems find jobs, they tend to pay poorly: More than 80 per cent of Canadians with the lowest literacy skills make less than \$27,000 a year. Further, close to 33 per cent of employers report problems because some members of their staff are insufficiently literate.

Literacy problems also increase the likelihood that children will drop out of school, and that negatively affects their employability and income: According to a recent study, people earn an additional 8.3 per cent annually for each extra year of education they receive.

Moreover, Correctional Services Canada reports that people serving jail time for serious offences are more than three times as likely as other Canadians to have reading problems.

Clearly, literacy problems affect everyone in B.C. since we all pay a heavy price when our fellow citizens are unemployed or incarcerated.

But all is not doom and gloom. There are many fine organizations, including the beneficiaries of Raise-a-Reader, that are working intensely on solving B.C.'s literacy problems. We know it's working: One study found that family literacy programs reduced participants' dependence on public assistance from 67 per cent to 11 per cent. Researchers also estimate that, over the lifetime of participants involved in early literacy intervention programs, returns to the public purse are \$7.16 for every dollar invested.

Clearly, family literacy programs make economic and social sense. And the best thing of all is that it's never been easier for every British Columbian to play a role. Simply pick up a paper tomorrow from your friendly neighbourhood celebrity.

Victoria to match money raised by literacy campaign [Final Edition]

Janet Steffenhagen. The Vancouver Sun. Vancouver, B.C.: Sep 8, 2005. pg. A.3

(Copyright Vancouver Sun 2005)

The provincial government will match all money raised by The Vancouver Sun and Times-Colonist in Victoria during the 2005 Raise-A-Reader campaign this month, Premier Gordon Campbell is expected to announce today.

It will be the second year in a row that the government has matched donations dollar-for-dollar.

In addition, the government is committing \$1.34 million for 50 adult literacy programs, including new initiatives in Vancouver, Abbotsford and Squamish, according to a government news release.

"Literacy is vital to the success of every child, every family and every community," Campbell says in the release. "Our investments will help British Columbians gain literacy skills they can use at school, at work and for the rest of their lives."

The money will help establish six new programs, support 10 existing programs with new activities and assist 34 established programs across B.C. It is expected that more than 4,900 people will learn reading, writing and numeracy skills to help with such tasks as filling out job applications, balancing cheque books and understanding their children's report card, the release says.

Vancouver Sun publisher Dennis Skulsky praised the government's initiative and its continued support for the Raise-a-Reader campaign.

"I would like to commend Gordon Campbell and the B.C. government for their outstanding commitment, leadership and financial support for improving literacy," Skulsky says in the release.

"It's well documented how important being able to read is to the social well-being of an individual, whether they are a young child, a student or a senior. We all own the responsibility to make this happen, and The Vancouver Sun is pleased to do our part."

The matched funds will support family literacy groups such as the Canucks Family Education Centre, Literacy BC, SUCCESS, the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, Home Instructional Program Pre- School Youngsters (HIPPIY Canada), Big Sisters and public and school libraries.

The Raise-a-Reader campaign, which started in Vancouver in 1997, is on Sept. 29 this year. The campaign is now active in 13 Canadian cities and last year raised \$1.66 million for literacy initiatives.

The Vancouver Sun and Times-Colonist raised \$948,000 in 2004, including the province's matching grant.

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Raise-a-Reader campaign gets provincial backing [Final Edition]

Janet Steffenhagen. Times - Colonist. Victoria, B.C.: Sep 8, 2005.

pg. A.2

(Copyright Times Colonist (Victoria) 2005)

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